

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 482

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 9218

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ET US

SUBJECT: SENATE HEARINGS ON ETHIOPIAN SITUATION

REF: STATE 191591

1. DURING COURSE OF CALL ON FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO AUG 5,
CHARGE PASSED ON SUBSTANCE OF REFTEL RE SENATE HEARINGS ON
ETHIOPIA/HORN OF AFRICA.

2. KIFLE WAS ALREADY GENERALLY FAMILIAR WITH FACT HEARINGS
BEING HELD. CHIEF AMONG HIS CONCERNS WAS THAT THEY WOULD
BE OPEN TO MISUNDERSTANDING - THAT THERE WOULD BE THOSE IN
EPMG (READ DIRG MEMBERS) WHO WOULD BE LIKELY INTERPRET
PUBLIC HEARINGS ON SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA AS SOME KIND OF
INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL ETHIOPIAN MATTERS. HE HIMSELF
UNDERSTOOD SEPARATION OF POWERS CONCEPT OF USG, BUT HE FELT
HE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY IN EXPLAINING HEARINGS AND EXPECTED
ONLY LIMITED SUCCESS. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PREFERABLE IF
HEARINGS HAD BEEN HELD IN CAMERA AS HE BELIEVED WAS CASE
LAST YEAR WHEN DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MULCAHY HAD
TESTIFIED BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE AND MADE STATE-
MENTS THAT HAD BEEN VERY HELPFUL TO US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS
(WE PRESUME HE MEANT MULCAHY'S TESTIMONY IN MARCH 1975
AT TIME OF EPMG'S SPECIAL REQUEST FOR AMMUNITION).

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3. DESPITE EXPLANATION PROVIDED REFTEL, KIFLE MUSED

ABOUT WHY HEARINGS HAD COME UP NOW AND THEN EXPRESSED SOME DISTRESS THAT FORMER EPMG FONMIN ZEWDE GEBRE SELASSIE WAS SCHEDULED TESTIFY WHICH HE SAID WOULD ALSO NOT BE WELL UNDERSTOOD (MOFA AMERICAN DIVISION CHIEF BERHANE DERESSA MADE SAME POINT JUST BEFORE MEETING WITH KIFLE).

4. CHARGE SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND THAT KIFLE MIGHT HAVE PROBLEM IN EXPLAINING US SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT TO OTHERS LESS WELL INFORMED THAN HE IS EPMG, BUT SUGGESTED THAT KIFLE AS FORMER AMBASSADOR TO US WAS UNIQUELY QUALIFIED IN THIS RESPECT. CHARGE REFUSED HOWEVER TO BE DRAWN INTO FURTHER DISCUSSION ABOUT HEARINGS NOTING THAT HE HAD PASSED ON WHAT HE KNEW AND DID NOT WISH SPECULATE FURTHER.

5. COMMENT: KIFLE WAS RELAXED DURING DISCUSSION, BUT CLEARLY CONCERNED ABOUT HOW HE WOULD HANDLE SUBJECT OF HEARINGS WITH DIRG. VOA NEWS THIS MORNING SAID THAT FORMER FONMIN DID NOT TESTIFY BECAUSE OF "SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES" WILL HELP. WE OF COURSE WILL APPRECIATE SUMMARIES AND/OR TRANSCRIPTS OF TESTIMONY AS SOON AS AVAILABLE.

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